2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina .

because it is believed to have resulted from the merger of English and languages used along the West African coast, including Ewe, Fante, Efik, Ibebio, Igbo, Yoruba, Twi, Kongo, and Mandinka. Since many African slaves were also brought from the Angola region of West Africa, some researchers suggest that Angola is a possible source for the word *Gullah*; *Geechee* may be derived from the Gidzi, a language and people in the Kissy country of Liberia.[1]

The isolation without a doubt contributed much to the perpetuation of Gullah as the language of the Sea Islands, but it can be credited with achieving even more than that. Growing up as a black majority almost free from outside social influences, such as racial prejudice characteristic of the white-dominated society in the inland parts of the United States, undoubtedly affected the attitudes and perceptions of the islanders, to the extent that few of them wish to leave the islands today. Lorenzo Dow Turner found as late as 1949 that some islanders had never been to the mainland.[2] With improved bridges and roadways, most have easy access to and from the islands; however, several of the elderly informants for this study reported that they had not left their island in at least forty years.

Today, as I have indicated, the islanders are still very private people and will often guard the secrets of their culture just as they make attempts to guard their language. When I asked some Charlestonian informants why they supposed the islanders speak the way they do, they gave this interesting account:

Francis: Why they speak the way they does?
Jean: Why they speak the way they do?
Francis: Oh, I don't know. I think it's [because] they used to use that pump water long ago.[3]
Jean: No-o-o-o. I don't think it has anything to do with the water. I mean, the water do taste different from the city water. But . . .
Francis: I know it's different.
Jean: I really don't think it has anything to do with [the water]. I think it's just, maybe it just the fact that they is isolated more than we are. You know, and . . . ah . . . most people over there just content to be left alone. . . . They don't see many people that . . . ah . . . speak anything different or learn anything different. And they are content with their life, you

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 135]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

191
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know. . . . I really don't know why they speaks that way. I don't . . . I don't guess too many people do know why. . . . But I be knowing it's not the water. It doesn't . . . I mean what goes into your system, it comes out on the other end. I mean that . . . this don't damage the brain, or vocal cord, or anything like that.

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Some serious studies of Gullah were undertaken during the first half of the twentieth century, but most of them were linguistically prejudiced. Scholars such as George P. Krapp, Reed Smith, and H. L. Mencken treated the language as a corrupted and intrinsically inferior dialect of English.[4] A. E. Gonzales, a journalist and untrained linguist, provided the most biased and perhaps the most inaccurate linguistic account: "Slovenly and careless of speech, these Gullahs seized upon the peasant English used by some of the early settlers and by the white servants of the wealthier colonist, wrapped their clumsy tongues about it as well as they could, and enriched with certain expressive African words, it issued through their flat noses, and thick lips."[5]

Convictions such as this one were easily refuted by later studies. Lorenzo Turner wrote in 1949: "Up to the present time I have found in the vocabulary of the Negroes in the coastal South Carolina and Georgia approximately four thousand West African words, besides many survivals in syntax, inflections, sounds and intonation. . . . I have recorded in Georgia a few songs the words of which are entirely African."[6] Since Turner's study, most research on Gullah has recognized its legitimacy as a linguistic system. However, no one has studied all of the various categories which are components of any language. As a result of the recent focus on the study of inland black speech in the United States, new curricula have been developed, better teacher-training programs have been implemented, and some negative attitudes have been reversed, not only for black students but for all students who speak nonstandard varieties of English.[7] Given the record associated with the study of "proper" or standard English usage, these accomplishments are no small feats. But not enough work has yet been done on Gullah.

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

142
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Mrs. Bernice Robinson

EVERYBODY LISTENED WHEN ESAU TALKED

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Esau did not get the kind of recognition he deserved for the work he did. He spearheaded so many things: the Charleston County Citizens' Committee, the Credit Union (and it was countywide, which is very unusual), the Comprehensive Health Center on Johns Island. He would be really proud if he was alive today to know that they got the nursing home and the senior citizens' home. He fought like anything to get the health clinic on the island so they could have medical care for the people over there.

While he was living, he didn't get that much praise. But it didn't daunt his efforts at all. His children suffered a lot for him being so aggressive. They couldn't get jobs in Charleston County. But he still wouldn't let that turn him around. He continued to fight for what he thought was right for his people.

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Esau didn't finish his high school education until after he'd gotten married. There were a lot of people, professionals or educators, who felt that if he changed the way he talked, it would be so much better. But I used to say, "Everybody listens when Esau talks in his same Gullah language." He was telling it like it is, and they heard what he was saying. You would think that with the exposure he had, and with him going all around the country, some of it would rub off. I don't think he wanted it to rub off. He maintained his speech as it was. So he had criticism from a lot of the educated folk, but he was saying what they needed to be saying. And he got the benefits for them.

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He would have a whole lot to say about education. He would be very disappointed about how far we still have to go, but he wouldn't be bitter about it. He would be saying that we haven't accomplished yet what we need to accomplish. And he would see in what way he could work to bring it about.

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mrs. Idell Smalls

I WANT THE YOUTH TO BE PROUD OF WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE'RE FROM

159 I was born on Yonges Island. My mother was a farm worker, my father an oyster picker. I attended elementary and high school here on the island, but my family could not afford to send me to college. Instead I worked on the farm and restaurants to help my mother raise six children. I married and lived for a time in Washington, D.C. I returned to the island for a visit and decided it was time to move home.

159 In 1985 I had the opportunity to go to Nairobi, Kenya. I had an experi-
177 ence that is hard to put into words. Being there, I could feel, smell, and relive my childhood through tradition, dialect, customs, and being able to look at my people there in Nairobi and see my family in South Carolina in
159 their faces. On returning home I wanted to instill in the youth and adults the
186 importance of holding onto our heritage and African customs, because not
178 many of us will ever get to Africa to experience what I did. I wanted the youth to be proud of who we are and where we're from.

191 The trip helped me address some of the problems our teens were having,
197 such as being teased about the Gullah dialect, which is a mixture of African and American speech. We began to develop a play called "In Celebration of
536 Us." Each teen adopted a senior at the senior center and began interviewing
888 her about her life. The teens wrote and produced the play.

We're focusing on changing images and instilling self-respect in the young adults of the sea islands through economic and cultural survival development.

ment for a creole language to survive.

Today, the language situation on the islands is complex. The communities are changing under the influx of commercialization, inter-island communication and improved educational facilities. No longer socially isolated, many inhabitants are becoming bilingual. They command both productive and receptive ability in English beyond that of speakers in earlier times. The nuclear family structure of the islands is such that the grandparents or some elder member is usually the established household spokesman, and assumes responsibility for rearing the children. As expected, there is evidence of creolization in the language of the younger generations. While many do not purport to actually speak the 'old time talk', they can and do use it in situations requiring them to be spontaneous (i.e. verbal attacks).

1.0. Focus of this study

The sociolinguistic pressures now exerted on the Sea Island communities match the general conditions that DeCamp (1971:351) has described for post-creole speech communities (i.e. communities in which a creole is in the process of merging with the standard language). There is a correspondence between the dominant official language and the creole, and there is sufficient breakdown in the formerly

8: Smith Q-4,5 (no date) 1926
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

695 A case in point will be enlightening. Here is a verbatim account" of the testimony in a suit brought in connection with a collision between two sail-boats in a heavy fog. The defendant asserted that no warning of any kind had been given.

695 "That is not so," the *plaintiff* declared. "My lookout gave warn-
539 ing in ample time; he hailed you long before you struck, and ran
us down; you had ample warning."

197 The lookout was summoned, a black man, sphinx-like, silent.

"You called out to the defendant the moment you saw him through the fog?"

"Me yerre um; no shum; *too* long buffo' me shum, me yerre um.""

"And the moment you heard them you sang out, is that not so?"

A grave nod assented.

The plaintiff rested his case; the cross-examination began:

"You hailed the sloop before you could see her; could they hear you hail?"

A succinct nod.

"How do you know?"

"Me yerre dem; dem blan fuh yerre we; yez yerre yondeh senkah yerre yuh.""

"You hailed them then?"

"Me duh holleh."

"That is what I mean: you hailed the on-coming vessel?"

"Me yent no sicarum; me holleh one patty-augah.""

"Very well. And what did you say?"

"Me say, 'Oonah konnou oonah?' "

Which is equivalent, in Gullah, to "*Whose boat is that?*" The records will show the outcome of the case; the writer has not the verdict recorded.

197 Again, in briefer scope, a deer hunter asked an old darkey if a certain stand was a good one for deer. "Me yent kin say, mossa," replied the old man, "W'en oona duh de-dey, de dee' duh no de-day; w'en oona yent dey, de dee' duh de-dey." That is, "When one is there, the deer is not there; when one is not there, the deer is there."

191 It is only fair to say that the low-country darkeys are

"Bennett I, 340, 341.

"'I heard him (them); I didn't see him (them); too long before I saw him (them); I heard him (them)."

"I heard them; thu (were) obliged to hear us; cure hear yonder same as hear here."

8: Smith Q-4,5 (no date) 1926

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

on their part just as much interested in and amused by up-country talkers, white or black. Plantation Negroes delight, though not appearing to do so, to watch a visiting stranger: "Dey use dem mout' so funny!"[a]

To come to the dialect itself, and to single out some of its most interesting features,[b] be it always kept in mind that Gullah is uniformly a spoken not a written speech. It lacks entirely any of the influences associated with writing or printing. It is untouched by the scratch of a pen save as it was recorded in transit, so to speak, by Mrs. Christensen, Colonel Jones, Mr. Gonzales, and others.

Both on this account and also because it has had to muddle along without the standardizing effects of education, in it all the leveling and simplifying processes possible to language have had free sway.[c] Furthermore, when it was first formulated as a medium of communication between master and slave, it was almost certainly a highly simpli-

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[a] Bennett I, 340.

[b] In this connection two important preliminary comments should be made.

(1) It is not meant that these features are unique in Gullah: some are, but many are not. Many of the grammatical usages, pronunciations, popular etymologies, proverbs, etc., are found in similar dialects elsewhere, and occasionally in general Negro usage or even in white usage in the South. For example F. M. Cronise and H. W. Ward, *Cunnie Rabbit, Mr. Spider, and the Other Beef: West African Folk-Tales*, E. P. Dutton, N. Y., 1903, gives the Sierra Leone Negro dialect wherein may be found many interesting parallels with Gullah. Compare also the remarks of Professor Krapp below, Note 36. Parsons, also, (Preface XVII) gives several Bahaman parallels such as *day-clean*, *man* as a form of address, *do* as a supplementary exclamation, and in Note 5 mentions further Sierra Leone parallels, *um* (them), *too* (very), *aintee* (South Carolina *enty*), *nyor* (eye), *titty*, (sister), and *oonuh* (you).

Likewise Mr. Bennett throughout his two articles (especially I, pp. 346, 347) calls attention to various parallels in Middle and Elizabethan English and in the peasant usage of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Sussex and Kent.

(2) Again, there was (and is) no standard Gullah in the sense that there is a standard literary English. As Mr. Bennett explains: "Gullah, as naturally followed from the constrained remoteness of distant plantations and absence of intercourse; phrases heard on the Altamaha are unknown upon the Santee; words in use in the Georgetown District vanish at Edisto; John's Island is not St. Helena's; Silk Hope was not Toogoodoo." (I, 341). Moreover, the particular method of reducing the dialect to writing, especially the degree to which phonetic spelling is carried, causes many variations among the different writers of the dialect. It is interesting to compare, for example, the Beaufort Gullah of Mrs. Christensen and John G. Williams, the Georgetown Gullah of J. Jenkins Hucks, the Combahee Gullah of Gonzales, the St. Helena dialect of Parsons, and the Edisto dialect of Marcellus S. Whaley.

An interesting example of the differences in Negro dialects is contained in Addison Hibbard's "Æsop in Negro Dialect," *American Speech*, June, 1926.

[c] Writing in 1867, W. F. Allen, one of the compilers of *Slave Songs in the United States*, says: "With these people the process of 'phonetic decay' appears to have gone as far, perhaps, as is possible."

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

Yarrabuh, Medina, and Binty (probably Bintu), the youngest, who was the only one of the family group who could not speak French. The others spoke English, French, and their native tongue. Why was it that Binty spoke only two languages? This fact raises still another interesting question.

Katie's grandmother was Margaret and Shad's was Hester. Both were apparently Mohammedans, since Katie and Shad remember fragments of their prayers and, in particular, the rice balls which the half-famished children were given when the sun went down on a certain fast day. They were vague about the time of year, but both gave me the identical recipe for making this ceremonial food. Katie said they got a peck of white rice from Darien and soaked it overnight. In the morning surplus water was drained off and the rice was put into the well-washed mortar. All the larger children were set to beating it. When it was fine, enough white sugar was added to make it taste like white loaf-sugar candy. Unlike a similar West African rice ball,[19] this type was not cooked. Shad said the pieces were made into dumplings, and that his grandmother used syrup if she could not get sugar. But Katie particularized and said the paste was rolled into balls "the size of small fowls' eggs" which were then put on a fanner and set aside to harden. When the children lined up to receive the rice balls, which were called "sarika," [20] the grandmother's eye was on the lookout for grimy hands. Any child whose hands were not perfectly clean had to leave and do a good job while the others waited. As she handed the sarika to a child she would say either "Sarika dee" or "Ah-me, Ah-me."

Portions of the prayer used by Bilali and his wife as they "got down flat," when it came time to pray, were remembered by both descendants. The two Mohammedans would hold a long string of beads. As Bilali moved a bead along he would say "Karo baro." Fatima would say: "Ah-me, Ah-me." When he moved the next bead he would say: "Saka baro" and again she would say: "Ah-me, Ah-me." Shad says he remembers hearing that Bilali ended his prayers with "Mohammedoo." According to Charles S. Wylly, in *Seed Sown in Georgia*, his grandfather, Thomas Spalding,

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She gives the names of the days in the Fanti language, and it is interesting to find that a boy born on Monday is called Kujot—probably Cudjo—and on Tuesday, Quabina, which was the name of a faithful slave at Retreat Plantation. Friday's child was called Kufi, and it is now easy to see where Kaffie Jones got his name.

[19] Described by M. J. Field, in Gold Coast Food (The College Press, Pamphlet No. 3).

[20] Dr. Turner attributes the name sarika to the Bambara tribe, which inhabits the greater part of the French Sudan. This tribe is said by Geoffrey Gorer to be fanatically Mohammedan, and reared in a warlike tradition.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

spot long enough to find out many fascinating things about Africa's black residents, mentions the fact that "In the cold wet months it is inconvenient to have . . . a [funeral] feast, and if some one dies at that time of year, the feast is often postponed until the dry season."

Negro preachers—particularly those who possess good voices and a store of spicy proverbs—often deliver sermons and offer prayers that stick in the mind. One I heard in Liberty County (the one whom I thought afflicted) expatiated on the subject of sin. He made it clear that certain types were worse than others. "Sin is a mean thing," and his tone was scornful; but when he said: "Self is a terrible thing!" it was thunderous and convincing. In a barn of a church in Camden County the substance of the preacher's prayer was in these touchingly earnest words: "We're down here, Lord, chewin' on dry bones an' swallerin' bitter pills. We can't do nothin' without You." Whatever may be said about the emotional character of the religion of our American Negro, it must be conceded that his sins are of the flesh rather than the spirit. He is generous with his last crust, and there would be no need of orphanages if white people, in proportion to their means, adopted as many children as colored people.

When it comes to terse economy of speech we are obliged to concede that no one can equal the Negro. Mrs. Annie Arnold, born on St. Simon's in 1844, gave me the perfect example of this fact in recounting a bit of local history. A cargo of slaves of the Ebo tribe had been landed at a suspiciously secluded spot on the west side of the island. They preferred death to a life of captivity, and as they walked into the water the leader said: "The water brought us here. The water will take us away." No one but an African could have expressed such poignant unhappiness in so few words. In view of the fact known to traders that the Ebo men made poor slaves and were prone to suicide,[35] the account is probably true. The Negroes believe the story, and to this day they have to be extremely hungry to fish by themselves at Ebo Landing. One night a few years ago some colored boys braved tradition, and went 'possum hunting in the neighborhood. I have my own ideas as to the real cause of their terrifying experience, but the fact remains that no others have been tempted to repeat it.

Sir Charles Lyell tells us that "The slave trade ceased in 1796, and but few negroes were smuggled into Georgia from foreign countries, except indirectly for

[35] For this reason as few as possible were accepted by the traders.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

sionally a white servant. Grandparents, parents, children, and grand-children succeeded each other on the same plantation, growing up under intimate communal relationships but in almost complete isolation from the outside world. Thus their whole body of traditions, customs, superstitions, language, religion, and mental background remained in a state of arrested development and were handed down practically unchanged. 175 567 178

This picture is accurate for the period following the introduction of rice and cotton culture. There was, however, a period preceding the development of the large plantation system during which the South Carolina colonists made their living chiefly from small plantings and from naval stores and other products arising from the process of clearing the land: pitch, masts, beams, staves, and the like. It took years to build up a large plantation. Among the early land holders there were probably very few who had enjoyed a status of wealth and high education in the mother country. The typical settler was an English peasant, laborer, or middle-class man with very limited means who began with a small piece of land and gradually increased his holdings, acquiring indentured servants or slaves or both for his labor supply. There was here and there a man of wealth and distinction, but the typical colonist was a man of small means, one who spoke dialect English, as distinguished from literary English. The most numerous class in the colony before the slave trade began to flourish was composed of indentured servants, laborers, and artisans. They worked side by side with the Negroes and came into contact with them in various other ways, and it was from them that the slaves learned most of their English. 175 175 567 191.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

175 177 191 567 197 Another important factor in the development of Gullah is the tendency of the white man to reduce his language to a lower level when communicating with someone who does not speak English. In breaking in new Negroes the white man used a sort of "baby talk." He simplified tenses, inflections, gender, number, etc., until there was left but a skeleton of literary English. What the Negro heard, therefore, was something still more simplified than the English dialect which the white servants and laborers around him used.

Gullah was thus in the making, in fact, was probably fairly well made, before the large plantation régime came into existence. Successive additions of new slaves undoubtedly acquired their language education from the Negroes who had already assimilated to some extent the English of their white associates. Later, when rice and sea-island cotton culture made large plantations possible, the system of slave organization and discipline was such that slaves had few contacts with the class of whites who spoke the literary English.[6] Slaves were supervised by overseers whose speech was, as a rule, that of the English peasantry.

175 567 The Civil War and emancipation made very little difference in the lives of the slaves. Most of the Negroes remained where they were. Indeed, if anything, they were now more isolated than before, because many of the white planters, made penniless by the war, left their 177 plantations and sought their fortunes elsewhere. On some

[6] The house servants are excepted, of course. Occasionally one finds a Negro in the Gullah country who speaks very clearly and has a surprisingly large vocabulary. It nearly always turns out that he was a domestic servant in the home of some cultured planter.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

of the low-country aristocracy. An expert in South Carolina linguistics can listen to a low-country man for a moment and tell whether he is from Georgetown, Charleston, Edisto, Beaufort, or some other locality. The low-country speech has certain characteristics which distinguish it from the up-country speech, as is true in the case of the Negro, yet there are local variations depending upon the English background and subsequent environment of particular families and neighborhoods.

The Negro's almost complete loss of African language heritages is startling at first glance, but slavery as practised in the United States made any other outcome impossible. In order to accommodate the slave to the routine of plantation life, as well as in the interest of discipline and order, the planters saw to it that new Negroes were distributed so as to work with seasoned slaves. This broke up tribal bonds and made difficult the survival of Africanisms. The learning of English was a practical necessity. It was the only medium of linguistic exchange. Only thus could the slave understand his overseer, converse with his fellows, and comprehend the interesting things which took place about him. So thorough was the language substitution that there now remains only a handful of words which are indisputably of African origin and which have attained to a respectable degree of diffusion.

American white speech areas—New England, Northern, Western, Southern, etc.—owe their origin to the dialects of England.[1] Characteristics of Southern speech, for

[1] Only recently was it realized that this is true. American scholars have been in the habit of supposing that our dialect areas represent different stages in the development of standard English in England. But there was really no standard three hundred years ago except among the literary and court people. Even today there are places in England where standard English has made little difference

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

example, which are often attributed to climate or lassitude or to the influence of the Negro, are merely the continuation of the speech patterns of the English who settled the South Atlantic coast.[8] The Negro took over the English of the whites with whom he was associated, and he did it remarkably well. White speech has undergone some degree of change, moving a little nearer, perhaps, toward a standard American English, but, because of cultural isolation, the Negro lags behind, thus conserving the white man's linguistic past.

SOME EXAMPLES OF THE DIALECT

There is considerable variation to be found in the printed records of Gullah dialect. Part of this is due to the local and individual variations in phonology and part is due to the personal element of the recorder. The

with the plain people, who go on talking as they did in Shakespeare's day. There were several dialect areas, the major areas being the Scotch or Northern, the Midland, the Eastern, the Southern, and the Southwestern. Coastal New England, Virginia, and South Carolina were settled largely from southern, southeastern, and southwestern England. More than a hundred years later the northern English and Scotch-Irish poured into America, dominating the pronunciation of the North and West, but not modifying greatly the speech of the oldest section of New England. The Scotch-Irish came into the South from the Middle States via the Shenandoah Valley, settling the piedmont and mountain regions. Spoken English in the latter sections is now a blend of the Scotch-Irish type with the southern English type which pushed westward from the Atlantic coast settlements in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. For a suggestive article setting forth a similar point of view, see Hans Kurath, "The Origins of the Dialectal Differences in Spoken American English." *Modern Philology*, May, 1928.

[8] Take the Southern *r* for example. The Negro had nothing to do with our losing it. References to the distinction between the rough or Scotch *r* and the smooth or southern English *r* occurred in the grammars and dictionaries of three hundred years ago. Evidence drawn from rhyming words and from plays written in dialect shows that the *r* of lower England was the same as our Southern *r*. A later reference in the third edition (1823) of Walker's *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language* is interesting: "In England, and particularly in London, the *r* in *lard, hard, card, regard*, etc., is pronounced so much in the throat as to be little more than the middle or Italian *a*, lengthened into *laad, haad, caad, regaad*." (Quoted by Kurath, *Modern Philology*, May, 1928.)

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

as the following will be heard occasionally: *adswocate* (advocate), *bactize* (baptize), *bidout* (without), *cumposhashum* (conversation), *dimmycrack* (Democrat), *disgustuss* (disgusting), *fench* (fence), *muskick* (musket) *ruggidge* (rugged), *shoesh* (shoes), *stustifficate* (certificate), etc. Some pronunciations of this kind are descended from English dialect, some represent the minimum of accuracy which it was necessary for the Negro to achieve in order to make himself understood, and others are individual idiosyncrasies of the sort that are likely to appear in dialect anywhere.

GULLAH GRAMMAR

The Gullah grammar is merely simplified English grammar. Distinctions of person, number, gender, case, and tense have all been reduced to the minimum. Some of the features of Gullah grammar were copied directly from English dialect, and the rest seems easily explained on the basis of the simplified or "baby talk" type of speech used by the whites in teaching the raw slaves to understand English. The significant points of the Gullah grammar may be summarized briefly as follows. Only those particulars in which the dialect deviates from the standard language will be mentioned.

Nouns

As a rule the singular of a noun does duty for the plural. "Duh roostuh crow" may mean one rooster or ten roosters or any number of roosters. A sack of potatoes weighs fifty *pound*, a year has twelve *mont'*. However, *mens* is used for the plural of man, crabs are *crabbies*, while the ox is *oxin* and more than one is *two ox, t'ree*

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

alect speech is a debatable question, but it is more probably from the former. It is difficult to find anything specific on the musical intonations of eighteenth century English dialect speech. There are occasional references to the "Welsh cadence," the "Suffolk whine," the sing-song speech of East Anglia, etc., but probably none of these is quite the same as the Gullah intonations.

In English we use a stress accent to indicate the meaning of words, and speech melody is secondary. We indicate different shades of meaning or types of emotion by changes in pitch, but the definitions of our words are the same regardless of pitch. In West Africa, on the other hand, there is no such thing as stress accent. There is musical or pitch accent.[114] The same word may mean two entirely different things, depending on whether the vowel is pitched high or low. Thus in Ewe "fu" with the *u* pitched low means *sea*, with the *u* pitched high means *bone*.[115] The combination "ele afi" may mean, "he is here," "he rubbed himself with ashes" or "he caught a mouse," depending on the pitch accent of the vowels.[116] Since musical accent was the very life of the West African languages it is quite possible that the Negro carried over this language habit to some extent and that this accounts for the presence of the unusual pitch fluctuations heard among the old-time Gullah speakers. The survival of such a habit did not interfere with the Negro's efficiency as a speaker of English, for English accents are of the stress type, and any musical qualities remaining in his speech

[114] For a discussion of these accents see Carl Meinhof, *An Introduction to the Study of African Languages* (tr. by A. Werner), p. 70 et. seq. See also *Les Langues du Monde* (ed. by Meillet and Cohen), part entitled, "Langues du Soudan et de la Guinée."

[115] Meinhof, p. 77.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

194
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would be looked upon by the plantation owners as interesting embellishments.

The following graph is offered as an illustration of the differences in pitch range and speed between Gullah and ordinary Southern white English speech. It is merely suggestive. The pitch differences are only relative, since it would require the use of phonophotography to discover the absolute ranges. The left-hand graph represents white speech, the right-hand, Negro speech.

1 SEC.
I don't know, mam.

0.6 SEC.
I ent know, mum.

African Words

174
192
Tracing the etymologies of words supposed to be of African origin is anything but an easy task. Perhaps this is why some of the English dictionaries refrain from giving specific etymologies, merely saying that a certain word is "African," or "of African origin," or even omitting these remarks. On the other hand, some writers have been too quick to attribute certain words to Africa. The mere discovery that a word is used in Africa and is different from any known modern English word is not always sufficient evidence that the word is African or that it was brought into English by Negroes. One must not forget that for more than a hundred years before the American slave trade began, European explorers and traders, especially the Portuguese and the Dutch, had contact with various parts of the African coast, and that this made pos-

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

569
181

Sir Charles Lyell even found a difference in the cultural development of the various sea-island Negroes. Those on the smaller plantations on St. Simon's Island were, for instance, more civilized than those on the larger estates.[9]

When Edward L. Pierce visited St. Helena Island in 1862 to observe the plantation conditions as an agent for the Federal Government, he arrived at the conclusion that slavery had bred out of the Negro all manly qualities. They had become "an abject race, more docile and submissive than those of any other locality." They did not want to fight; they did not want to be uplifted; they wanted to be left alone. "Nowhere has the deterioration of the Negroes from their native manhood," he wrote in an article for the *Atlantic Monthly*, "been carried so far as on these Sea Islands,—a deterioration due to their isolation from the excitements of more populous districts, the constant serveillance of the overseers, and their intermarriage with one another, involving a physical degeneracy with which inexorable Nature punishes disobedience to her laws."[10]

569
177

On St. Helena Island, where there were some two thousand slaves to a little more than two hundred whites, the Negroes learned very slowly the ways of the whites. Their mastery of English was far less advanced than that of the Piedmont slaves. They spoke a garbled English, imperfect words and expressions which they and their parents and grandparents had learned from the few whites with whom they came in contact. Their speech mystified the northern missionaries who came to the Island

569
191

[9] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 268.
[10] *Atlantic Monthly*, Sept., 1863; also in E. L. Pierce, *Addresses and Papers*, p. 106.

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(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

567
.191

after the Federal occupation in 1861. Arthur Sumner, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, tried to describe to his cousin their way of speaking. "These negroes speak with an inarticulate jabber. The sounds roll around in their great chops, and come pouring out through their huge mouths, so that I find it easier to understand a foreign language than confused utterance. Their idioms, too, are funny. I told Byron, a boy who waits upon me, that I was going to distribute clothing on his place. 'Talk *we* house?' said he:—meaning, 'Are you speaking of our house?' . . . Byron came to me with a message from his mother—'Ma says if you give her some trade'—Imagine such a sentence uttered as if it were a word of many syllables. Can you make it out? . . . 'Ma wants to know if you will give her some thread?'"[11]

567
181
184

These missionaries from the North, who, of course, knew nothing first-hand of slavery, thought that the St. Helena Negroes were the most degraded and backward of all the coastal slaves in the South.[12] After the northern whites had become acquainted with other sea-island Negroes from such places as St. Simon's Island, Georgia, and Edisto Island, South Carolina, who were quartered temporarily on St. Helena Island by the Federal Army, they were still of the opinion that the St. Helena slaves were the most retarded in the South except those on the sugar plantations in Louisiana. Arthur Sumner wrote late in 1862, "The Georgia and Florida negroes are vastly superior in appearance, character, and intelligence, to the natives of these Islands. It is the testimony

[11] Arthur Sumner Papers. Port Royal, May 18, 1862. The last word was pronounced as if spelled tred, not trade.

[12] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 181.